

GOVERNMENTAL OPERATIONS

Agency 215

Utilities and Transportation Commission

Recommendation Summary

Dollars in Thousands

	Annual FTEs General Fund State	Other Funds	Total Funds
2005-07 Expenditure Authority	154.0	41,247	41,247
Total Maintenance Level	151.7	34,467	34,467
Difference	(2.3)	(6,780)	(6,780)
Percent Change from Current Biennium	(1.5)%	(16.4)%	(16.4)%
Performance Changes			
Office Systems Migration		850	850
Revise Pension Gain-Sharing #		(72)	(72)
Nonrepresented Staff Health Benefit		47	47
WFSE Collective Bargaining Agreement		1,252	1,252
Self Insurance Premiums		(16)	(16)
Nonrepresented Staff Salary Change		560	560
Subtotal		2,621	2,621
Total Proposed Budget	151.7	37,088	37,088
Difference	(2.3)	(4,159)	(4,159)
Percent Change from Current Biennium	(1.5)%	(10.1)%	(10.1)%
Total Proposed Budget by Activity			
Administration	9.1	2,049	2,049
Agency Commissioners	7.6	2,349	2,349
Pipeline Safety	21.3	5,282	5,282
Public Counsel		1,888	1,888
Railroad Safety	13.0	3,044	3,044
Regulation of Consumer Services	22.9	4,310	4,310
Regulation of Energy Companies	21.3	4,348	4,348
Regulation of Water Companies	3.8	605	605
Solid Waste Companies Licensing, Regulation, and Safety	11.4	2,363	2,363
Telecommunication Companies Licensing and Regulation	22.8	4,702	4,702
Transportation Companies Licensing, Regulation and Safety	18.7	3,378	3,378
Other Statewide Adjustments		2,770	2,770
Total Proposed Budget	151.7	37,088	37,088

PERFORMANCE LEVEL CHANGE DESCRIPTIONS

Office Systems Migration

Funds are provided to migrate the Commission's information technology platform to bring it into compliance with adopted statewide standards. (Public Service Revolving Account-State)

GOVERNMENTAL OPERATIONS

Self Insurance Premiums

Funding for the Commission's self insurance premium is decreased to reflect claims experience. (Public Service Revolving Fund-State)

ACTIVITY DESCRIPTIONS

Administration

This activity provides administrative, financial, human resource, and information services to the Utilities and Transportation Commission (UTC).

Agency Commissioners

Three commissioners regulate private utility and transportation businesses in the public interest by reviewing company filings, making decisions on contested matters, adopting rules for regulated industries, and advocating Washington's interests before national and regional forums. The commission is an administrative, quasi-judicial, and quasi-legislative state agency. The commission decides matters including rule making; changes to company rates, terms, or conditions for service (tariff revisions); and requests by companies to take action, such as transferring property, issuing securities, or changing accounting practices. Issues involving substantial disagreements or affecting substantial legal rights become formal, adjudicated legal proceedings under the Administrative Procedures Act, RCW 34.05.

Pipeline Safety

Washington is one of five states granted inspection authority over interstate hazardous liquid and natural gas pipelines by the federal government. The UTC inspects interstate and intrastate pipelines to ensure they are constructed and operate in accordance with state and federal statute and regulation; audits company practices; investigates accidents; reviews design and construction of new pipelines; develops pipeline rules and policies to protect Washington citizens, enhance the safe movement of these products, and seek enforcement of regulations where appropriate; and works closely with local governments, community organizations, first responders, and citizens to ensure they are informed of pipeline issues in their communities.

Public Counsel

The Public Counsel Section of the Office of the Attorney General is responsible for representing the interests of residential and small commercial customers in electric, gas, and telecommunications proceedings before the UTC and state courts. Although Public Counsel is funded through the UTC budget, it is a branch of the Attorney General and thus, is independent of the commission.

Railroad Safety

The commission provides for public and railroad employee safety by implementing engineering, compliance, and education programs that reduce deaths, injuries, and property damage on or around railroads. Inspectors work with local road authorities, the Washington State Department of Transportation, railroad companies, and the public to ensure that railroad/highway crossings and warning devices are designed, built, maintained, altered, and closed in the safest possible manner. Inspectors enforce laws and rules to ensure the safety of hazardous materials handling, track structures, operating practices, signals, clearances, and walkways. Trespassing and crossing accidents and derailments are investigated to identify rule violations and general safety problems. Staff participate in Operation Lifesaver, a national program to inform the public about rail safety issues.

Regulation of Consumer Services

This activity ensures that regulated companies treat consumers fairly and consistently. This is accomplished by mediating disputes between consumers and regulated companies; responding to consumers' questions about service and consumer rights and responsibilities; providing technical assistance to companies to help them improve service delivery and reduce complaint levels; analyzing complaint data for consumer fraud, deception, or abuse; conducting formal investigations into companies that appear to be using unfair, misleading, or deceptive business practices; making recommendations on needed compliance actions or improvements; and monitoring companies after formal action to ensure the commission's directives are met.

Regulation of Energy Companies

The regulation of energy companies involves overseeing rates and business practices of investor-owned natural gas and electric utilities to protect consumers, encourage investment, and ensure adequate energy supplies and reliable service. This is done by reviewing tariff changes and contracts of regulated energy companies, reviewing annual reports and other technical information, presenting expert testimony in contested cases before the commission, and adopting and enforcing rules for regulated companies.

Regulation of Water Companies

The regulation of water companies involves overseeing rates and business practices of regulated water companies. This is accomplished through working with privately-owned water companies and their customers to set fair rates for drinking water; protecting captive water customers from potential abuse by water companies; developing, explaining, and enforcing water rules and policies to protect consumers and encourage investment; reviewing tariff changes of regulated water companies; and working with water companies and the Department of Health's Drinking Water Program to resolve service complaints about water quality and quantity issues.

Solid Waste Companies Licensing, Regulation, and Safety

Solid waste regulation involves overseeing rates, service areas, safety, and business practices of regulated solid waste collection companies to ensure reasonable rates and desired services. This includes setting fair rates for the collection of residential and commercial garbage and residential recyclables; resolving billing and service problems; auditing companies; adopting and enforcing laws and rules; participating with counties and cities in the development of comprehensive solid waste management plans; working with collection companies to implement the plans; and collaborating with the Department of Ecology on recycling and the State Solid Waste Management Plan.

Telecommunication Companies Licensing and Regulation

Regulation of telecommunications companies involves: reviewing tariff changes, contracts, and interconnection agreements; removing regulation as competition increases; monitoring the performance of approximately 20 companies that continue to have a captive customer base; providing leadership on policy and operational issues within the telecommunications industry; working closely with all segments of the telecommunications industry, including other government agencies, federally regulated and unregulated carriers; presenting expert testimony in contested cases; facilitating informal resolution of conflicts in the industry; and, when necessary, participating in formal arbitration and enforcement cases.

Transportation Companies Licensing, Regulation and Safety

This activity oversees rates, routes, services, safety, and business practices of regulated bus companies, household goods carriers, airporters, low-level radioactive waste disposal sites, and commercial ferries. It includes rulemaking, permitting firms to do business, setting fair rates, resolving billing and service problems, auditing companies, and enforcing laws and rules.

Other Statewide Adjustments

This item reflects proposed compensation and other adjustments that were not allocated to individual agency activities. The agency will assign these costs to the proper activities after the budget is enacted.